

November 1949

Cooperative Extension Service and  
National Committee on Boys and  
Girls Club Work.

INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PRINCIPLES  
FOR THE NATIONAL 4-H CLUB CONGRESS

Prepared for use of information and public relations  
representatives of the National Committee on Boys and  
Girls Club Work and the Cooperative Extension Service

I. Introduction

All of us know that 4-H Club work is an influential and extremely vital phase of the Extension program. Four-H Club work equips rural youth with skills, knowledge, judgement and spiritual qualities which build a sound foundation for successful, happy and well-adjusted adult life.

That 4-H Club work is a great asset in the future progress of democratic American life and culture is axiomatic. To this end the broad principles upon which 4-H Club work is founded must be understood clearly by the public if sympathetic long-time support is to be insured.

It is desirable, too, for all concerned to understand the relationships between the Cooperative Extension Service and the National Committee on Boys and Girls Club Work.

Briefly, as you know, the 4-H program is a program of the people supported by public tax money through Act of Congress. Responsibility for the program has been delegated by Congress to the Cooperative Extension Service, both National and State.

To enable State 4-H workers to present suggestions for the furtherance of 4-H work, the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy of the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities created an Extension Subcommittee on 4-H Club Work.

The Subcommittee is composed of representatives of the Federal and State Extension Services, and its Chairman is a State 4-H worker. The National 4-H Club Congress program is planned and supervised by this group, and is conducted in cooperation with the National Committee on Boys and Girls Club Work.

The National Committee is a citizens' non-profit corporation organized to assist and further 4-H Club work in many ways in cooperation with the Federal and State Extension Services. This statement, however, is concerned only with information phases of 4-H Club work which relate to the National Club Congress.



Through the years the Committee has served in a liaison capacity, counselling with business and civic groups about ways of effectively assisting in furthering 4-H work. This donor support has been channeled into programs requested by Extension.

The programs are in keeping with the educational objectives of 4-H and in accordance with policies mutually agreed upon by the Cooperative Extension Service and the National Committee. This year 4-H awards and leader training funds exceeding \$380,000 are being provided through the National Committee.

These programs culminate at the National 4-H Club Congress, the general objectives of which are:

- (1) To encourage 4-H members to take stock of their accomplishments;
- (2) To give recognition for outstanding 4-H achievements;
- (3) Direct public attention to the contributions 4-H Clubs are making;
- (4) Provide opportunity for delegates and leaders to discuss ways in which they may advance the 4-H program;
- (5) Instill a greater pride in and respect for agriculture;
- (6) Broaden the education of youth through visits to points of agricultural, industrial and civic interest.

To assure that donor organizations have a public service viewpoint in their cooperative programs, the National Committee works closely with top administrative officials in donor organizations as well as with the public relations departments. Many of the presidents and board chairmen participate in the activities of the National Committee and have a first-hand knowledge of 4-H.

Not to be overlooked is the fact that thousands of State and county business organizations have been led to support 4-H work in their communities through the public-spirited example set by the national donors.

## II. Objectives

The objective in handling information at the Club Congress is to give the public, prospective and active club members and local leaders a factual interpretation of what happens at the Congress and in 4-H Club work. The over-all objective is to give a completely balanced picture of what club work is, and how it helps boys and girls to develop in all of the elements of good citizenship.

Naturally, because of the nature of the National 4-H Club Congress, which features the winners of contests, the major news stories feature the winner type of story. It is the news peg upon which a large percentage of the stories are written.

However, a large number of the working press and radio representatives come to the Congress because it gives them an outstanding opportunity to see American youth at its best. The tips and stories they gather at the Congress are "grist for



their mill" for months ahead.

It is our job to see that the public through the press, radio, television, and news reels gets the complete picture of 4-H Club work.

### III. Guiding Policies

The Cooperative Extension Service and the National Committee on Boys and Girls Club Work in 1939 established certain specific policies. Among them are these:

(1) The policy of interstate 4-H Club events will be determined by the Cooperative Extension Service.

(2) The Cooperative Extension Service will accept no awards which are contingent upon the publicizing of the donor.

The Extension Service also proposed that except for spot news, all releases presented for publicizing 4-H events, contests, or other activities should be released through the State Extension Services. In practice, the effectuation of this latter procedure has been worked out through mutual agreement between the National Committee and State Extension Services. News releases originated by the National Committee should therefore be distributed in accordance with procedure acceptable to the State Extension Directors in the respective States.

It was further agreed that any news releases on national 4-H contests would be issued and distributed exclusively through the Cooperative Extension Service and the National Committee.

(Procedures have been agreed upon with the various States, largely through personal conferences with State Extension Directors, State Leaders and Extension Editors and through correspondence in cases where conferences were not feasible. Since 1939, the National Committee has operated under these agreements, making adjustments, when after mutual consideration with State Extension officials, it seemed desirable to do so).

### IV. Operating Principles

The above policies are the basis of our mutual operating principles. Our joint efforts in helping to cover the Club Congress will be carried out along the following lines:

(1) Information coverage of the Club Congress will be a cooperative activity of the National Committee on Boys and Girls Club Work, State 4-H Club Leaders, Extension Editors, and the USDA Extension Service. All will work together under the Information Committee appointed by the 4-H Subcommittee of the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy.

(2) News follows what happens. When winners are picked, we will announce them, and give the best reasons why they won. These reasons are officially provided by the judges, leaders and record books.



(3) We will give the facts to the press and other representatives. We will not insist that they play up any particular project, donor, delegate, or leader. Our job will be to give a true and complete picture of the facts. We will place lead emphasis on the winners and their records, rather than on who gave the award. However, we will tell the press and radio representatives who the donors are and let them determine for themselves whether to give public recognition for the public service donors are rendering.

(4) We will emphasize in staff conferences that it is good public relations to service the working press and radio representatives first, and the representatives of the Cooperative Extension Service, National Committee, and donors later.

(5) Spot news will be released by the National Committee. Each release will show that it is "released in cooperation with the Cooperative Extension Service."

(6) We will try to give the public a true understanding of the basic objectives and operations of 4-H Club work. We know that the announcements of national winners and how much money they made is the easiest to write and most popular type of news at Club Congress. At the same time, we will try especially hard, with the assistance of State Leaders, to help the press and other groups cover discussions and other activities of the delegates and their records back home. This will involve such things as:

- (a) Special efforts to serve feature, educational and editorial writers with feature material as actively as we try to serve spot news writers and news photographers.
- (b) Increased efforts to make available to press and radio headquarters a file of feature material about the delegates sent in by State Extension Editors and Club Leaders.
- (c) Putting more basic emphasis on the club member and the club record in the winner releases we put out, insofar as sound news coverage will allow.
- (d) Checking every news story, every interview, every mass information activity in terms of whether or not it gives the following impressions about club work.
  - (1) That club work is educational: A "learn by doing" kind of program aimed at training and developing boys and girls into more useful citizens with high ideals.
  - (2) That club work develops self-confidence and initiative.
  - (3) That club work is cooperative; the youth part of the Cooperative Extension Service educational program for rural people.
  - (4) That contests and awards encourage boys and girls to achieve the broad educational objectives of 4-H work.



- (5) That money earned in a project is only one measurement of the success in a 4-H project; it's the training and self imposed discipline that counts -- the progress made in meeting the opportunities, situations and obstacles faced by the club members.

V. Organization of Information Responsibilities for the National 4-H Club Congress

- (1) All information policies and practices at the National 4-H Club Congress will be in conformity with the over-all broad policies of the Cooperative Extension Service and best accepted rules of good journalism.
- (2) Information activities and the content of information materials in support of the Congress will be designed to carry out the purpose of the operating principles stated above.
- (3) Broad policy direction of the information program of the Congress will be centered in the Extension Subcommittee on 4-H Club work in keeping with recommendations of the press committee. Details of policy direction will be in the hands of the headquarters, press, radio, and television committee.
- (4) The Subcommittee will each year appoint an Information Coordinator and Assistant Information Coordinator for the Club Congress, together with press, radio, television, and other needed information committees. The Information Coordinator should have had previous experience as a working member of the Congress information staff, preferably as Assistant Coordinator.
- (5) All information operations and activities and the assignment of information staff duties during the Club Congress will be worked out cooperatively by the Information Coordinator and the Press Committee. On broad policy matters he will be responsible to and report to the Extension 4-H Subcommittee. On general operations he will look to and report to the representatives of National Committee on Boys and Girls Club Work.
- (6) General information operations and advance plans for operations within established policies are essentially responsibilities of the National Committee on Boys and Girls Club Work.
- (7) Policy questions which arise while a Congress is in session and which require fast consideration to maintain the constant flow of news should be submitted to the Information Coordinator. In collaboration with the Headquarters Committee he will make a temporary decision after consulting insofar as possible with other members of the Information Committee. However, the decision made should be submitted to the Extension Subcommittee on 4-H Club Work after the close of the Congress for final decision with reference to information operations of future Congresses.
- (8) The Information Coordinator shall submit a report, together with recommendations, to the 4-H Subcommittee and to the National Committee at the close of the Congress.



Warranted  
to be  
the  
best  
of  
its  
kind

1871  
No. 1  
1871